

## Session 7

### Personal safety in private places and relationships

#### Rationale

Children have been taught through generations to listen to their elders and to obey them. This kind of conditioning helps abusers take advantage of children as they know that children will not disobey them. People who violate Personal Safety Rules, in most cases target those children who they believe will not resist or report them. In such a scenario it is important that children are taught to express their feelings assertively even in the face of fear. The goal is not to remove fear, as fear helps children know that something is wrong, but to build the courage to act despite the fear.

Sometimes what the children fear is repercussions from the potential offender or from their parents/caregivers. Sensitive caregivers would encourage children to be assertive and say that they do not like certain things for their safety. They would not punish or blame the child or call the child rude or misbehaved! This is accomplished by building a sensitive and knowledgeable support system. When children are encouraged to develop a feelings of self-confidence they will be less at risk to be abused and possibly more able to stop any violation of their personal safety rules by saying, 'No' and going away from the scene.

Sexual abusers may blame the child or put the onus of the abuse on the child and make him/her feel guilty. The child may feel that it was his/her fault that the abuse took place and may not report instances of abuse thereby keeping the cycle of abuse going. To prevent this from happening it is important that children believe strongly that it was not their fault. Otherwise, when they grow older, they may experience unease or they may also experience guilt, shame and self blame. Even children who have learnt that they should report matters of abuse to their elders start feeling a huge sense of guilt if they had not reported the matter earlier. They also start blaming themselves for keeping quiet about the matter. They may also think that since the abuse took place long time ago they need not reveal it as it will not help them. Due to these factors children find it difficult to report matters of ongoing or previous abuse. It therefore becomes important to let them know that no matter what the reasons are/were it is still not their fault. They were never taught personal safety rules, they were not given the vocabulary to report abuse by their elders, they were not encouraged to talk about private body parts. Shame and dirt was wrongly instilled in parts of the body. How could they report? Hence it is also never too late to report matters of abuse.

#### Materials required

- Marker pen
- Any sticking substance (Blu Tac / double sided sticking tape / cello tape / board pins)
- Session 7 worksheets/charts

#### Objective of session 7

To impart and help children internalize the following messages:

**Core Message 1: I can shout/say 'No' for my safety.**

**Core Message 2: Safety guide to follow when someone breaks a safety rule: NO. GO. TELL.**

**Core Message 3: There is no shame in any part of our body.**

**Core message 4: It is not my fault if someone troubles me. The trouble maker is to be blamed.**

### **Core Message 1: I can shout/say 'No' for my safety.**

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Methodology: Role plays and examples for discussion:

Q1) If someone's bullies you, what can you say?

Q2) If someone comes too close to you and you don't like it, what can you say?

Q3) If someone touches you and you don't like it, what can you say?

Q4) If someone makes you uncomfortable, breaks your body rules, or troubles you, what can you say or do?

A1) "Stop it! I don't like it!"

A2) "Please move away!"

3) "Stop it! I don't like it!"

A4) Say no. Go away from that person whenever you can.

Discussion: In these instances ask them how the student can protect him/ herself. Bring in the concept of NO-GO-TELL. Go away from that person. Go on telling until you get help.

Preempt the abuser. Before he can tell stories to your parents, you go and tell them what happened.

What should you do when someone breaks Personal Safety rules or when someone violates your body safety rules ? In such a situation we can 'Say "No" and get away from the situation'.

**Refer to Annexure 7:1 for more examples for role plays and what-if questions.**

### **Tips for Trainers**

- When demonstrating 'Saying No', you should stand straight and look into the eyes of the other person and say 'No' emphatically.

### **Making Connections**

Teaching students that it is okay to say "No" is essential. It may, in some cases, help prevent or mitigate abuse to some extent.

## **Core Message 2: Safety guide to follow when some breaks a safety rule: NO. GO. TELL.**

- (1) of an uncle touching and hugging a niece
- (2) Older housemate asking his younger to watch a movie with him. Sits very close to the boy and begins to touch his thighs.
- (3) Driver of the auto the student comes to school in touching the thigh and saying "Oho so you are growing up!"
- (4) 25 year old tutor tells the a 14 year old boy that he will teach him about growing up. He shows some pictures and movies. Then begins to touch in an unsafe manner. When boy says he will tell his caretaker the tutor says "but your caretaker won't believe you. He trusts me.. You don't study well. You have at times lied to him! He won't believe you."
- (5) Rita is a 13 yr old girl. Her neighbor boy is a friend who she meets and talks casually to him around her home now and then. Of late in the conversation, he has been using sentences which seem to have double meaning or he says jokes which are confusing / seem to have double meaning. When she tells him that she doesn't like what he is saying, he denies it saying 'What is wrong? I only meant this'. This type of conversation is making her uncomfortable.
- (6) Example: Rima is a 15 year old girl. There is a boy in the tenth standard line who stands next to her in the morning during the school assembly. Of late she finds that the way he is looking at her makes her feel uncomfortable. Whenever she turns, she finds him looking straight at her and then his gaze is focusing on her chest. She is beginning to feel uncomfortable and yukky about that look.

### **Saying No**

Along with saying No loudly, stand straight and look into the troublemaker's eyes.

Demonstrate this in front of the class and then ask all the students to repeat it in the same manner.

How will you say NO to a shopkeeper asks you to touch his/her private body parts by offering you a bribe of a video game from his/her shop?

Practice using phrases they like - such as, NO, DON'T, I DON'T LIKE THAT, I'M GOING TO TELL ON YOU.

Sometimes we find it difficult to say 'No' to elders we know well as we feel they may get upset for disrespecting them. However, the only way we can protect ourselves from further harm is if we express our displeasure. If a person truly cares for us they will immediately stop behaving in a manner we do not like. Also the person who may be trying to harm us may stop doing so when he / she realizes that we are not afraid of him/her and are brave enough to express our displeasure.

It is always wiser to express your feelings assertively as it will not only help you get your message across but it will also prevent you from hurting others or even yourself. Assertive is when you can clearly express your disagreement or displeasure without hurting or insulting the other person.

## **Tips for Teachers/ Trainers**

- Please discuss as everybody is special and unique all of us have different understanding of personal space. However personal body safety rules need to be followed by all
- **Being Assertive** means to express your feelings and views firmly and confidently, without insulting the other person or becoming violent. For example if someone breaks safety rules you assertively tell the person, "This is not right. Stop it."
- **Being Aggressive** is when you harm the person by physically hurting or saying cruel things or making threatening or ridiculing gestures.
- **Being Submissive or Passive** is when you do not express your feelings or views, even though you actually want to. This can be out of fear or a feeling that your views and feelings are not as important as the feelings and views of the other person.

**Core Message 2: Safety guide to follow when someone breaks a safety rule: NO. GO. TELL continued...**

**Not being Able To say 'No'**

Sometimes however, in spite of knowing all the different ways of saying 'No' we may still find it difficult to say anything. This can happen if we are scared or just confused or shocked. In such a situation we must not get upset with ourselves. Such things happen sometimes. We can try saying 'No' in our mind either at that moment or sometime later if possible.

**Getting Away from the Situation**

We can say 'No' and try to 'Get Away' from the situation.

What are the different ways by which you can get away? Give time for students to respond.

Yes we can walk away or run away from the place. Sometimes we may call out for help.

It may not always be possible to get away immediately.

What do you think you must do then? Give time for responses.

In a situation where we cannot get away immediately we must learn to wait patiently for the correct time and get away only when it is safe to do so

Bring out the necessity to tell an adult about such incidents.

Refer to case studies in the Annexure 7: 1 for children to enact in the form of role plays where they enact out a healthy response to the situations depicted.

Each of us has limits or boundaries. When our behavior and the behavior of others are acceptable to us or are within our boundaries, we feel comfortable and safe.

When someone chooses to act using behaviors that are "out of bounds," he or she may feel guilty, ashamed, or scared.

How do you think a person would feel if someone crossed his or her boundaries or treated him or her disrespectfully? [The person may feel threatened, scared, disappointed, angry, etc.]

Being clear about our boundaries helps us to know how to act toward others and how to decide if a friendship/ relationship is healthy and positive or "out of bounds." Each of us has the right to be treated respectfully by others and we are responsible to respect the boundaries or limit others set for them. Positive friends are respectful and responsible.

MY personal boundary

Linking Personal Boundaries/privacy to Body

We have discussed that our body is personal and it is only ours. Hence we also have personal boundaries regarding our body?

- Who can I shake hands with?
- Who can hug?

While you should maintain your personal boundaries and respect other's personal boundaries adults have a responsibility to ensure that no body violates your personal boundaries around body and private body parts.

**Tips for Teachers/ Trainers**

Ask children to enact healthy response to the situation for e.g. saying No assertively and seeking help; do not depict or make children enact actual scene of abuse

Please reiterate as each one of us is unique, we have different likes and dislikes; so we have different sense of boundaries. We need to respect each other's personal boundary even when it is different from ours.

**Core Message 3: Awareness and alertness helps in safety.**

Methodology: What are the different ways in which we communicate with other people?

Discussion: Say that clothes have become a part of our body language. Our bodies are designed to attract. We need to be aware of our surroundings and the people who may be in that place when we decide which kind of clothes to wear. At the same time, the person who takes any action, violates anyone's safety rules is responsible and accountable for it. There is no excuse for abusing or assaulting anyone.

Methodology: Are we aware of our surroundings when we are with other people? How do our senses help us to be safe?

Discussion: We can pick up signals about safety of the surroundings if we keep alert and use our senses. We can sense what is happening then. It makes sense to keep a look out, if we are in our own world talking on our cellophane, texting or listening to music i-pod, we do not have an idea of our surroundings. It is good to be aware.

Discuss Law Under POCSO:

A 15 yr old girl loves a 19 year old boy. They run away to live together as their parents were against the relationship. The girls' parents file a case of kidnapping against the boy. The couple is caught. The boy is charged under POCSO act for sexually abusing the girl and ends up in jail. The girl is sent for counselling. Discuss.

#### **Core Message 4: There is no shame in any part of our body**

Blame the person who deliberately breaks rules.

Draw two stick figures – A and B

- 1) Two people, A and B. A steals B's pencil box. Who is to blame? Who should be punished? Whose shame is this?
- 2) Two people A and B. B is following all body safety rules. A deliberately breaks B's body safety rules. Who's to blame? Who should be punished? Who's shame is it?

B has not done anything wrong, so it is not his blame or shame.

The blame and shame is that of A. There is no shame in our body. Our behavior may be shameful. To purposely trouble someone and break their safety rules is shameful.

Anecdote: In school, a boy pulled another boy's pants down and started laughing at him. Many other boys joined him in making fun of this child.

What do you think about this situation? Who did the wrong thing? Who broke the rules? Who should be reprimanded? Whose behavior was shameful?

Anecdote: A group of boys have been teasing a girl about her breasts? What do you think about this situation? Who did the wrong thing? Who broke the rules? Who should be reprimanded? Whose behavior was shameful?

#### **Tips for Trainers**

Children may want to talk about their experience of violations that they have faced; or they can talk about how they always thought it was their fault.

Support the child through the disclosure, if any. Refer appropriately taking the child into confidence.

Handle such situations separately rather than in the group.

In case a child has shared in the session, remind children the ground rules of maintaining confidentiality and being empathetic.

#### **Making Connections**

A quick recap of all the previous lessons will be useful in building up a strong base for this session.

Sexual abusers may blame the child or put the onus of the abuse on the child and make him/her feel guilty. The child may feel that it was his/her fault that the abuse took place and may not report instances of abuse thereby keeping the cycle of abuse going on. To prevent this from happening it is important that children believe strongly that it was not their fault. They were never taught personal safety rules, they were not given the vocabulary to report abuse by their elders, they were not encouraged to talk about private body parts. Shame and dirt was wrongly instilled in parts of the body. How could they report? Hence it is also never too late to report matters of abuse.

**Core message 5: It is not my fault if someone troubles me. The troublemaker is to be blamed.**

Anecdote:

In the bathroom, a girl pulled another girl's pants down and started laughing at her. Many older girls joined her in making fun of the younger child. The child started crying.

A boy pulled down his pants in front of a group of girls. When the girls turned away, he laughed at them and taunted them.

What do you think about these situations? Who did the wrong thing? Who broke the rules? Who is to be blamed? Who should be reprimanded? Whose behavior was shameful?

Explain: if someone touches your private body parts it is never your fault. It is always the fault of the person who broke Personal Safety Rules by touching you. Remember if anyone breaks Personal Safety Rules then it is always that person's fault and not your mistake.

Say loudly, clearly and confidently, "It is never my fault if someone else breaks Personal Safety Rules". Give time to repeat this if necessary.

There could be times when a person breaking Personal Safety Rules may make you believe that they meant no harm to you and that it was only for fun. Even if you think the person was right at that moment, you must still remember that it was not your fault. And you can still tell.

Repeat again, "It is not my fault" loudly, clearly and confidently.

Use gestures while stating, 'It's not my fault'. Encourage students to repeat the same as often as possible to instill the concept firmly in their minds.

What if you felt shy or scared and so did not say, 'No' to the person? Is it then your fault? Give time for responses.

It is still not your fault, if a person breaks Personal Safety Rules. It is always that person's fault for breaking the rule.

Even if you find it difficult to say, 'no' always think, 'no' in your head and keep telling yourself that it is not my fault. Think, 'no, I don't want this, I didn't ask for it, this is not my fault.' Thinking, 'no' even if we don't say, 'no' will give you the courage to tell someone at a later date. It is never too late to tell.

Also ask the students if it is their fault if they are forced or coaxed into breaking Personal Safety rules in a situation. It is still not your fault. The person who does the action (breaks rules) is to blame.

Accidental violation of rules: In such a case we must remember that it happened by mistake, it was not intentional. We don't continue looking or touching and go away from that place.

## Making Connections

When children who have been abused grow older, they often experience unease or guilt, or shame. Very often they also blame themselves for being abused. Even children who have learnt that they should report matters of abuse to their elders start feeling a huge sense of guilt if they had not reported the matter earlier. They also start blaming themselves for keeping quiet about the matter. They may also think that since the abuse took place a long time ago they need not reveal it as it will not help them. Due to these factors children find it difficult to report matters of ongoing or previous abuse. It is therefore important to let them know that no matter what the reasons are/were, the abuse is still not their fault. The abuser had the advantage of age, power and social conditioning. He/she is to blame. It was the abusers fault. The shame this the abusers. Abuse can be reported at any time. It is never too late to report matters of abuse. The abuser may be abusing other children and needs to be stopped.

**Summarize and review the key messages:**

What did you learn today?

Reiterate

**Core Message 1: I can shout/say 'No' for my safety.**

**Core Message 2: Safety guide to follow when someone breaks a safety rule: NO. GO. TELL.**

**Core Message 3: Awareness and alertness helps in safety.**

**Core Message 4: There is no shame in any part of our body.**

**Core message 5: It is not my fault if someone troubles me. The trouble maker is to be blamed.**

The safety guidelines that we have discussed now and the ones that we will discuss in the next sessions are all such that will not only help you take care of yourself but will also help you to assist your friends whenever necessary.

## **Annexure 7:1**

### **What if Questions/Role Plays**

- Your friend's uncle touches her private body parts when no one is around. When she tells her father about it he does not listen to her. What must she do?
- Someone talks about your or others' private body parts?
- Your friend's uncle says to her, "We will play a fun game of seeing each other's private body parts", what should your friend do?
- One elder boy says, "I will teach you how to use the internet for finding information from the mobile", and then shows you someone's private body parts, what should you do?
- Your elder brother or sister shows you pictures of naked people and talks to you about them. When you tell your mummy about it, she does not believe you. What should you do?
- One of your friends tells you to watch a movie in which adult private parts are shown, what would you do?
- Your cousins plan to tease each other by peeping in the bathroom while the other cousin is having a bath, what would you do?
- A big boy says that he'll show you something cool about your private body parts. What must you do?
- Your tuition teacher touches her private body parts while teaching her about private body parts and shows her pictures of others private body parts in some magazines, then what should she do?
- M and T are best friends. Last month, T refused to go to computer room at night as he wanted him to look at a film showing the private body parts of adults. After that M has stopped talking to her and is talking ill about her to other friends.

